(c) whether Government propose to take steps to raise domestic production of diesel/petrol; if so, to what extent;

(d) whether Government also propose to take steps to curb consumption of diesel/petrol;

(e) if so, the details thereof; and

(f) if the answer to part (d) above be in negative, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) The estimates of oil pool account deficit are arrived at considering the import prices for crude and refined products, the Rupee/Dollar Exchange rate, indigenous availability and pricing of crude oil and petroleum products, likely demand of petroleum products and claims of Refining and Marketing oil companies under Administered pricing Mechanism.

(b) The position of the oil pool account is being monitored on a continuous basis and measures taken to contain the deficit.

(c) By the terminal year of IX plan (2001-02) domestic refining capacity is likely to be enhanced to 131 MMTs which would substantially increase the availability of MS/HSD.

(d) to (f) Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA) plays the role of a catalysing agency for achieving petroleum conservation in the four major sectors of Indian economy viz. Industrial, Transport, Agriculture and Domestic sectors by propagating and encoureging conservation techniques and modes including conduct of energy studies, R&D efforts and by creating awareness among and educating public on the importance, methods and benefits of conservations.

Use of Propane as Fuel in Two-Wheelers and Three-Wheelers

625. SHRIMATI ANANDIBEN JETHABHAI PATEL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the Supreme Court's order to test to use of propane gas on 50 two-wheeler and 50 three-wheeler vehicles and its effect on environment;

(b) if so, the action taken by Government in this regard;

(c) whether Government have directed the State Governments to use propane as fuel in two-wheelers and three-wheelers, on experimental basis;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, whether Government propose to do it now?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) The Supreme Court in its hearing on 9.12.96 on a public interest litigation has desired that the Government should facilitate a private company to undertake an experiment as a pilot project on 50 number, each of 3-wheelers and 2-wheelers, with 2-stroke engines to ascertain whether propane could be an eco-friendly substitute and viable alternative to petroleum-oil, which is causing pollution at present.

(b) Steps have been initated to comply with the order of Supreme Court.

(c) to (e) No, Sir. State Governments will take their own decision after the policy in this regard is finalised.

Rise in the Oil Import Bill

626. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that oil import oil for the current financial year is likely to rise to about Rs. 33,000 crores, as reported in the Hindustan Times dated the 10th February, 1997;

(b) whether it is a fact that ONGC's production has registered a 4.5 million tonne decline during the current financial year and that the current rate of oil production of 0.7 million barrels per day will last only about 22 years; and